

The Love Potion  
A Fairy Tale Enchantress Short Story  
By K. M. Shea

*This short story takes place during the events of Apprentice of Magic.*

Angelique sat in the safety of Evariste's workshop, shivering as she stared at the blank paper on her desk.

She was *supposed* to be writing up the report for the sentient-puppet-assignment/fiasco they had just returned from solving the day prior.

*A diligent student would have begun their report last night. Or after breakfast. Or before cleaning the entire workshop from top to bottom.*

She suppressed another shudder. *But I can't bring myself to write about it.*

"You still haven't started your paper?" Roland, Angelique's magical kitten, mewed from his velvet cushion. He was bigger now, but still a little clumsy as he tried to majestically get off his cushion and instead slipped and faceplanted.

Angelique rubbed her pointer finger in the fuzzy black fur on the top of his head. "I can't help it. It was a traumatizing event."

"It was a *puppet*."

"A very *rude* puppet!"

Faintly, Angelique heard a knock.

Roland opened his mouth—probably with an insult in mind—but Angelique lightly tapped his nose to distract him.

There, another knock.

"Ruffian!" Roland sputtered.

"Sorry." Angelique marched across the workroom, aiming for the stairs.

"Where are you going?" Roland called after her.

Angelique paused at the top step. "Someone's at the door, I need to answer it."

Roland hopped off the desk and made his way towards her. "You're just trying to get out of your report."

"No, I'm not," Angelique fibbed. "Evariste is gone visiting with King Channing and Queen Lisheva. He told me to look after the Thicket in his absence."

"It does not mean you aren't purposely delaying your work. Now pick me up." Roland batted at her skirts with a paw.

Angelique grumbled as she scooped the kitten up, carrying him downstairs where she plopped him on an end table in the hallway.

He protested, but she turned away too quickly for him to make a jump for her.

"Be good," Angelique said as she put a smile on her face.

"I am *intrinsically* good!" Roland complained.

"I wasn't talking to you." Angelique took a deep breath, rolled her shoulders back, then threw the door open. "Hello, can I help you?"

A young woman stood at the house entrance, a pleasant smile on her lips though her eyes were wide with awe as she yanked her stare from the house to Angelique. Her green gown was

clean and serviceable, and though her undershirt had only a touch of embroidery at the neckline, the cloth was still a bright white.

*Middle class, then. Her hands say she does some work—a royal servant, perhaps? Or maybe a merchant's daughter?*

“Ah, yes,” the young woman said. (In truth she looked about seventeen or eighteen, which made Angelique more disposed to think of her as a young girl, but she was fairly certain if she called the young lady that she would protest the youthful idea.) “Is Lord Enchanter Evariste available?”

Angelique shifted slightly so she wouldn't lean against the doorframe as she wanted to. “I'm afraid not.”

The girl's expression drooped. “Oh, I see,” she said in a voice heavy with disappointment.

Angelique gave the girl another lookover. “But I am his apprentice and an Enchantress-in-Training. Perhaps I may be of service?”

She brightened, her eyes shining again. “Oh, would you, Lady Enchantress?”

“Enchantress-in-Training.”

“I do *so* need your help,” she continued without registering the correction.

Angelique briefly pressed her lips together as she weighed out her options. *I'm not keen to invite her inside as I don't know exactly what the situation is. Staying outside the Thicket would be wisest.* Angelique stepped through the doorway, pulling it shut behind her—ignoring Roland's protests as she did so. “Why don't we take a stroll through the yard, and you can tell me why you are in need of aid.”

The girl nervously clasped her hands together and bit her lower lip. “Thank you, Lady Enchantress! Thank you.”

“I'm afraid—as I said earlier—it's only Enchantress-in-Training, miss...?”

“Amice, My Lady.”

Angelique nodded as they approached the pond—keeping an eye on the swans that paddled on its clear surface. (The birds, though beautiful, occasionally got it in their cracked knobs to act more like attack dogs than swans.) “What seems to be the problem, Miss Amice?”

Amice blushed and wrung her hands. “I am in love,” she declared.

Angelique waited a moment or two for more information, but it seemed none was forthcoming. *How am I supposed to react to that?* “...Congratulations?” she asked more than stated.

Amice slapped her palms to her cheeks. “Pate is so handsome and strong. If I meet his gaze it sends a thrill through me! I steal away whenever I get the chance to watch him work the forge—he's a blacksmith's apprentice you know.”

Angelique squinted in the bright light, more than a little confused. *Why would being in love bring her to an enchanter's doorstep?* “I see?”

Amice giggled as they followed the curve of the pond to the far shore. Abruptly her cheer leaked from her, and her lower lip trembled. “There is just one problem.”

*Ah, here we go.*

“Pate does not love me in return.”

Angelique blinked. “Pardon?”

“Pate does not love me in return—he is sweet on another girl. And so, I am in need of a love potion—the strongest you have!” Amice held her hands in front of her, in an almost

prayerful gesture as she scrambled to stand in front of Angelique. “Please, Lady Enchantress, make one for me!”

Angelique hadn’t stopped blinking as she struggled to process the girl’s rather jumbled words. “You love a man who doesn’t love you, so you want me to brew you a love potion that will *force* him to love you?”

“Yes!”

*Is she insane? At the very least she is stupidly infatuated—someone in love would never make such a selfish request!* Angelique inhaled deeply, forcing herself to remain calm. “I’m afraid that’s not possible, for love potions don’t exist.”

“They don’t exist? Surely not!” Amice protested. “You must mean they are only frowned upon?”

“No,” Angelique said through clenched teeth. “I mean *they do not exist*. Love is a powerful emotion that plays an important role in various magics. It is *impossible* for magic to twist love in the manner you desire—not even black magic is capable of such a thing!”

This was correct—mostly. Of course, there were short term potions that could make a person infatuated, but they didn’t last for more than a day, or at most a week, but even those potions created more of a puppy-like infatuation than true love.

*Love is far too powerful for even enchanters and black mages to muddle with. We can use it with our magic, but we cannot use our magic to make it. It would be like a single ant attempting to carry a horse—impossible.*

The tremble of Amice’s lower lip became more pronounced as they rounded another bend in the pond, taking them back to the entrance of the house. “T-truly?”

“Truly,” Angelique said with some wryness. “No, I’m afraid Miss Amice that if you want this Pate’s heart, you’ll have to go about it the old-fashioned way and *earn* his admiration. There are no short cuts when it comes to love.”

“I see...but maybe there is a potion that will make him think well of me?” the young girl tried.

*(Definitely a girl now, because only someone childish would make a request like this.)*

“There is not,” Angelique said firmly. “Good day, Miss Amice.” She opened the door to the house and stepped inside.

“Oh, but maybe—”

“Have a safe journey home.” Angelique shut the door on the young girl’s request, shaking her head in dismay.

Roland, who was curled up in a fluffy ball, cracked an eye open. “You look like someone plucked your feathers. What happened?”

“Nothing,” Angelique said. “It’s just *shocking* how people don’t stop to ponder the ways their personal desires might affect others.”

“Humans are selfish,” Roland yawned. “Now pick me up and take me to the kitchen. I desire a snack.”

“And *that’s* not selfish?”

“It is, but I am a magnificent creature worthy of such treatment—not an ugly, mostly bald being like you humans.”

“I see. Well if you’re so *magnificent* surely you can manage a small thing like getting to the kitchen yourself.”

“No, for I am—where are you going? Angelique—I say!”

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The following day, when Angelique was pushing a unicorn foal from the kitchens, there was another knock on the door.

“It sounds like we have company,” Evariste said. He also left the kitchens, sandwiching Angelique between himself and the unicorn foal.

“Yes, I will answer the door.” Angelique wriggled, trying to free herself.

“We could answer it together,” Evariste brightly suggested.

“No, it’s fine.” She grabbed the unicorn by the neck when he started nibbling on a leaf of a rare orchid, dragging the foal in her wake.

She stopped at the door just long enough to smooth her skirts and twitch her hair into place, then fixed a polite smile on as she threw the door open. “May I help you?”

Standing outside was a brawny young man. Though his appearance was neat and clean, the faint smell of smoke and hot metals wafted from him.

*A smith of some sort*, Angelique decided as she glanced at his muscled forearms.

“Good day,” the blacksmith said rather nervously. “Is this the house of Enchanter Evariste?”

“It is,” Angelique said. “I am his apprentice and an Enchantress-in-Training. How can I help you, master...?”

“Hudde,” the young man provided.

Angelique nodded, then grabbed the unicorn when it leaned forward to sniff Hudde and narrowly missed stabbing him with its pearly horn.

Hudde rolled his shoulders back. “I’m here for a love potion.”

Angelique almost released the unicorn in her surprise. *Another one of these? Why?* Angelique opened her mouth to give the young boy his answer (He, too, would now be relegated to boy due to the nature of his selfish request) but he held up his hand to forestall her.

“I’m in love with a beautiful woman, Amice,” Hudde said, shocking her a second time.

*What are the chances that he wants a love potion for the girl who wanted a love potion for someone else?*

He continued, “She is kind, gentle, and unselfish.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure about that,” Angelique muttered.

“But she is sweet on my fellow apprentice, Pate,” Hudde explained. “Even though everyone knows Pate is a goner for Rohese.”

“The plot thickens,” Angelique dryly said.

“To protect her from heartbreak, I would like a love potion that I might use on Amice, so she would come to fall in love with me instead,” Hudde said. “For I do love her, and I would do anything to keep her from pain.”

“Yes, I can tell by your *genuine* request for a love potion that is not *at all* self-serving,” Angelique said.

“Exactly!” Hudde said brightly.

Angelique sighed and clenched her eyes shut to stifle her desire to thump her head against the doorframe in her irritation.

“So, you will make one for me, then?”

“I’m afraid not.” Angelique opened her eyes again and stood tall, forcing herself to slant her eyebrows in an expression of slight sympathy. “Love potions exist only in stories. They are not real, and they cannot be made.”

*Thank goodness. As exemplified by this, humans are already terrible at love. We don’t need more help bungling our attempts at romance.*

“But can’t you—”

“So sorry, but I’m afraid not. Safe travels!” Angelique cheerfully bid. She firmly shut the door and sighed, sagging slightly.

“That was an unusual request,” Evariste said from directly behind her.

Angelique grudgingly turned around to face him. “I had one yesterday as well.”

Evariste winked and briefly squeezed her hand. “You handled it perfectly.”

“Thank you. It’s a *silly* desire.”

“Yes. Unfortunately, such things seem to come and go in fashion. I remember when I was an apprentice, Clovicus and I were sent to investigate a swindler who was posing as a mage and selling fake love potions. He had the whole region in an uproar.”

Angelique covered her mouth with her fingers in a show of dismay. “How unfortunate.”

“Yes, though it was outrageously funny when he revealed he was only giving them water with juice from crushed berries. Shall we return to our tea?”

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A day passed, and Angelique thought the strange influx of love-potion-seekers was over. She thought wrong.

In the late afternoon, just at the edge of dusk, there was a knock at the door. Given that Evariste was reviewing the report she had *finally* written for the sentient puppet incident, Angelique slipped downstairs to answer the knock.

She swung it open and was surprised to find a middle-aged man on the doorstep.

He stood with quiet confidence that perhaps bordered on arrogance given the slant of his chin, and wore clothes that were carefully pressed and meticulously in place. His blonde hair was threaded with silver and gave him an air of competence, but his smile seemed a little brittle.

“Good evening.” One of his eyebrows flicked up when he studied Angelique. “I have come to discuss a business transaction with Lord Enchanter Evariste.”

Her hackles raised, Angelique frowned. “Enchanter Evariste is occupied at the moment. I am his apprentice and an Enchantress-in-Training. How can I help you?”

“Very good,” the man said. “You may be allowed to help me, then, for I am seeking a love potion.

Angelique’s smile turned feral. “*Are you?*”

“Not for myself, but my daughter, Rohese. She has a suitor, a blacksmith.”

“Pate?” Angelique guessed.

The man blinked. “Are you skilled in the magic of foresight?”

“Maybe. Why do you need the potion?”

“Because I want her to marry wealth. My brother-in-law has connections with a rich merchant with a single son who agreed to marry Rohese. But my wife refuses to make the girl marry for something other than love, so I’d like to manufacture that connection.”

“Can’t be done,” Angelique said. “*So sorry.*”

The man bullishly shook his head. “Money is no object.”

“It has nothing to do with money. Love potions aren’t real. They are fables. Made up.”

The man pursed his lips. “Let me talk to Lord Enchanter Evariste.”

“He’ll tell you the same thing. Love potions don’t exist, and even if they did no mage would make one as it *coerces* a human being. Good luck with your daughter, and good evening.”

Angelique slammed the door on the objecting man and smiled smugly for a moment. *Well. That made me feel a bit better. Though if I ever find out who started this love potion craze I*

would appreciate being given three minutes alone with them and a heavy, thickly bound book of morals.

She shook her head as she started down the hallway, hoping that was the end of it.

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Bright and early the following morning, Angelique held her breath as she made a tiny twist in the spell she was working on.

Using her magic, water from a porcelain teacup rose into the air in individual droplets, glowing with a rainbow haze. The water flowed together, forming the liquid shape of a galloping horse.

“Excellent, Angel. That’s just the right amount of control you need,” Evariste said, his voice barely above a murmur. He stood next to her, his head slightly tilted as he watched her work.

Angelique gave him the smallest of nods and licked her lips, almost afraid that too much movement would break her concentration and destroy the shape. Slowly, carefully, she pushed a tiny amount of her magic into the water, and the misty horse began to gallop in place.

“Making shapes out of water, ice, fire, or any element, is a great way to perfect your grasp on that particular element. It’s tiring, but the more you do it, the easier it will become.” Evariste was silent for several moments, then added. “And don’t be afraid to interact with your exercises.”

Angelique swallowed, her eyes pinned on the horse as she made it toss its head, sending tiny flecks of water into the air. “What do you mean?”

“Here.”

Out of her peripheral vision, Angelique saw Evariste reach for her right hand. Sliding his palm along the back of her hand, he pulled her fingers forward until Angelique reached out in front of her, and the water horse settled on her pointer finger.

Angelique blinked at the wet, dappled sensation of the horse prancing the length of her finger.

Evariste lightly squeezed her palm. “Now—”

A knock at the door interrupted the Lord Enchanter and startled Angelique, breaking her concentration.

The water lost its shape and fell to the ground with a splat, splashing droplets everywhere.

“I’m sorry! So sorry, I’ll clean it up right away.” Angelique took a few steps backwards, looking for a rag to wipe the liquid up with.

“Nonsense. You get the door, I can handle this,” Evariste said.

Angelique bit her lip. “But I made the mess.”

Evariste grinned as he flexed his hand, and blue magic twirled around his fingertips. “What mess?” he innocently asked as the water rose from the ground.

Angelique watched with admiration as he dexterously pulled the water into the air, then returned it to the cup Angelique had originally pulled it from.

*He really is amazing.*

Another knock at the door.

“I’m going!” Angelique exited the kitchen and hurried down the hallway. She smiled as she flung open the door. “Good morning...” Her good cheer dropped, replaced with a wave of suspicion as she peered at the young lady on the house stoop.

With her brown eyes and brown hair she perhaps would have been common, except her smile—tentative as it was—was warm and bright.

*And yet, given the past few days, what are the chances she wants a love potion?*

“Can I help you?” Angelique asked with precise politeness.

“I hope so, is this the home of Lord Enchanter Evariste?” the young lady—possibly girl—asked.

Angelique slightly narrowed her eyes. “...Yes.”

“Would it be possible, then, to purchase an invisibility charm here?”

Angelique relaxed, her relief making her usually polite and kind smile a little more enthusiastic than necessary. “Of course! Please come in!”

After showing the girl to the front sitting room, Angelique turned to join Evariste in the kitchen to inform him of the situation, but paused at the threshold of the room. “Do you mind explaining why you need an invisibility charm? They can be *quite* expensive, but depending upon what you want we might be able to come up with a different charm that is more cost efficient.”

“Yes, but, I’m afraid you’re going to find my reason for wanting one to be rather silly,” the young lady laughed self-consciously.

“Never, miss...”

“Rohese,” the young lady said.

*Rohese? Why does that sound familiar? WAIT.* “You’re Rohese—the Rohese Pate the blacksmith’s apprentice is sweet on?”

Rohese’s brown eyes widened. “How did you know?”

“I have had some...*interesting* interactions with some folks from your hometown the past few days,” Angelique dryly said. “So tell me, why do you want an invisibility charm? Given your fellows, I’ll admit I’m surprised you’re not asking after a love potion.”

Rohese flinched, and Angelique stiffened, like a wolf scenting blood.

“No, I have no desire for a love potion,” Rohese said. “No use for one either. I’d much rather go unnoticed.”

“What do you mean?”

Rohese stared at her hands for several long moments. “I just want to live in peace. I like my life as it is now. I don’t want to think about marriage yet. And I don’t want to be hated.”

Angelique narrowed her eyes. “Are they *troubling* you?”

“No, no! Nothing like that!” Rohese shook her head. “But, I hear the whispers. Amice has feelings for Pate, and sometimes it makes her a bit upset that Pate likes...someone else. And I know that Papa has been talking to a merchant. But I don’t *want* to get married yet.” Rohese pressed her lips tight together. “I work in the royal stables. I care for Queen Lisheva’s mounts, and the mounts of her friend, Lady Vorah. It’s extra special because before Lisheva was queen, girls weren’t allowed to work in the stables. And she hired *me*! I don’t *want* to give my work up yet. I just want to live in peace.” She bit her lip, but Angelique could still see the faint sheen of tears that glazed her eyes.

Angelique crossed the sitting room and crouched down in front of Rohese, taking her hands into her own. “Your desire is not silly, nor is it outrageous. You have a right to peace.”

Rohese nodded, but pressed her lips together even tighter in an effort to keep tears from falling.

Angelique released Rohese’s hands and leaned back on her heels as she considered the situation. “You live in Mersey, then?”

“No, in Upper Swell. A tiny village just a short walk north.”

Angelique’s smile grew. “Perfect. Go home, Rohese. I’ll come visit you in a day or two with a spell that will help you live this life you want.”

“What about payment?” Rohese asked.

Angelique darkly chuckled. “Don’t worry about that. This situation strikes me as *needing* a moral lesson. And who better to deliver one than an Enchantress-in-Training?”

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Angelique could hardly keep herself from gleefully rubbing her hands. She stood in the center square of Upper Swell, dressed in a drab cloak with a hood.

Evariste’s smile bordered on doting as he stood at her side, clothed in a far more extravagant cape. “I’m glad you are excited about today’s outing. It’s unusual for you to volunteer yourself for a task.”

“Yes, but after Rohese’s visit yesterday I realized that it wasn’t enough just to turn away those seeking a love potion,” Angelique piously said. “I need to teach them a lesson. With magic *and* words, of course!” She laughed airily and patted her hand over her heart.

“Naturally,” Evariste agreed—though his grin seemed a bit lopsided and he loudly cleared his throat. “I’ll just leave you to it, then. You’re my cute little apprentice—you’ll handle everything just fine.” With a wink and a swirl of his cape he was gone, leaving Angelique alone in the bustling center square.

Dusk was settling in the sky, staining it shades of violet and scarlet red as the villagers headed for their homes.

Angelique grinned mischievously, then forcibly smoothed her lips and cleared her throat. “Attention, residents of Upper Swell!” she shouted. “I am Angelique, an Enchantress-in-Training and apprentice to Lord Enchanter Evariste. I have come to your fine town so that I might ask, who, here, would like a love potion?”

The bustle of movement slowed, then stopped as more and more residents paused to look in Angelique’s direction.

“Come now, don’t be shy!” Angelique coaxed. “Who would like a love potion?”

“Me! I want one!” Amice—the young *girl* who had first inquired after the potion—elbowed her way through to the center. “I *knew* you were lying when you said you couldn’t make one!” She stormed up to Angelique and clicked her tongue in displeasure.

“Then I’ll take one as well!” Hudde declared.

A middle-aged woman came after him, followed by several more villagers.

Eventually, Rohese’s father joined the growing crowd. “I don’t know why you felt the farce was necessary, but I see you have come to your senses,” he scoffed.

“Uh-huh, yes,” Angelique vaguely said. She caught sight of Rohese standing with another young lady, watching from under the awning of a shop. Angelique held a finger to her lips and winked at her, then returned her attention to the crowd.

It had grown beyond what Angelique had planned for—though her plan was still feasible even with the increase in size. *I didn’t know this many people would be so selfish.*

“Is this everyone?” she asked. “I’m afraid I’ll only be able to do this once...”

Several of the villagers murmured, and two more joined the crowd.

Of the sixty or so people gathered in the square, Angelique estimated about thirty—maybe forty tops—stood before her, self-seeking in their desires.

“No one else? Truly?” Angelique turned in a circle, scanning the crowd, then nodded. “Very well.”

She spun around so she faced the horde of potion-seekers, then flung her right hand at them, throwing out the spell she had spent the day practicing and preparing. Her smile grew as she watched her silvery magic loop around the crowd.

“Thank you for joining me this *delightful* evening, and for giving me the chance to bestow upon you all a very important lesson,” Angelique started. “It’s funny, but it seems none of you standing before me stopped to think of what a love potion entails.”

The potion-seekers glanced at one another, and the quiet hum of whispers settled in the square.

Angelique started to prowl the perimeter of the crowd around her huddled victims. “By definition, a love potion forces a person to feel a powerful emotion for someone else, *against their own will*. At its bones, a love potion is a spell of coercion. It’s despotic in that it robs a person of their free choice, and puts them under the control of someone else.”

She reached the head of the circle again and twisted on her heels, taking great pains to meet the potion-seekers’ gazes. “It has become apparent to me that those of you who are standing before me are well aware of this, and yet *you don’t care*. So.” Angelique’s smile turned predatory. “To help you understand why it’s such a poor idea, I have just cast a spell to put you all under someone else’s will: *mine*.”

The hushed whispers became frenzied murmurs, and judging by the panicked expressions on some of the potion-seekers’ faces, they had figured out what spell she had cast.

“And my will is this: you will not move. You may stand, sit, or lie down, but you cannot step, scoot, or roll from the spot you stand in right now. No matter how you pull or struggle, you will not budge from this spot.” Angelique’s voice was loud and clear, piercing through the hubbub that ate away at the center square.

Several members of the crowd tried to walk away, panic flashing across their faces when they pulled at their feet and discovered they couldn’t move.

“That’s not fair!”

“This is monstrous!”

“A misuse of magic!”

“*Is it?*” Angelique was unable to keep the hiss from her voice. “Then what, pray tell, do you think *forcing* your affection upon someone is?”

Silence struck Upper Swell, and those whom Angelique had cast her freeze charm on gulped and stared at their feet.

“A drafty night outside is a grace you don’t deserve,” Angelique said. “Compared to the terrible things you would have me do, all for your personal exploit.” She tilted her head back so she studied the crowd with half-lidded eyes. “Next time you feel the desire to force a person into something they don’t want, or to twist their will against them, remember this night. Remember how powerless you felt, and how terrible it was to be unable to control your own body.”

Abruptly, she turned so she addressed the villagers who had *not* taken the bait. “And as for you who did not compromise for the sake of a potion, you have my admiration and respect. But tell everyone of this night in Upper Swell, so that *all* might learn through this unfortunate but necessary trial.”

Feeling rather dramatic, Angelique snapped her cloak, then glided off into the elongated shadows of the village.

When she reached a darkened street she almost hopped in her joy.

*It worked! That lesson should stick for at least a few decades!*

“Thank you, Lady Enchantress!”

Angelique quickly recovered from her glee and stood straight so she could offer Rohese a benevolent smile when she approached. “For?”

“That.” Rohese gestured back in the direction of the town square. “For teaching them—all of us, really—a lesson.”

“It was one that needed to be taught,” Angelique dryly said. “I have no idea where the sudden interest in love potions came from, but it is *most* inappropriate.”

“Oh, I can tell you who started it,” Rohese chuckled. “It was Lady Vorah—Queen Lisheva’s friend and companion.”

Angelique—who was acquainted with the fiery Lady Vorah given that Evariste took pains to be on good terms with the Torrens King, Queen, and royal family—frowned. “*Vorah?* I would have thought she would lambast anyone who would dwell on such a thing.”

Rohese laughed. “She meant it as a joke—she dropped by Upper Swell last week to thank me for training her favorite warhorse to bow whenever Queen Lisheva approached it. When I met her in the village square she jokingly said I must be feeding her horses love potions to get them to obey me so well.”

Angelique cracked a smile. *Ahh yes, that does sound like Vorah.*

“I cannot thank you enough for your help, Lady Enchantress,” Rohese continued, unaware of Angelique’s thoughts. “I do think this will end my difficulties. It seems like it was a great deal of work, though. I apologize you had to go to such lengths.”

She looked like she was contemplating curtsying, so Angelique rushed to respond.

“Great lengths? Not at all! *Teaching* is one of my great joys in life. Being able to impart such...wisdom upon folk is so invigorating.”

“If you say so, Lady Enchantress.”

“I do. Good evening, Rohese. Let me know if any trouble over this matter ever surfaces again.”

Rohese did curtsy this time, but she grinned. “Somehow, I don’t think there will be any quest for love potions for some time, Lady Enchantress. Good evening.”

Angelique smiled and watched the young lady leave. Just before Rohese re-entered the village square, she called after her. “Rohese...do you even *like* Pate?”

Rohese blinked in surprise. “Of course. I’m in love with him—though I’m not ashamed to admit I fell in love with the horseshoes he makes first. They are of great quality.”

Angelique blinked in surprise. “You love him, and yet...?”

“I love my work, Lady Enchantress,” Rohese said simply. “Pate is willing to wait for me. So, I’d like to keep on working. For now.”

Angelique watched in shock as the young lady marched off.

*All of this drama, for that?*

“Well done, Angelique.”

Evariste would have surprised her with his sudden arrival, but after Rohese’s revelation, Angelique didn’t have it in her to be startled.

“Thank you,” she numbly said.

Evariste’s shoulders were shaking suspiciously—with laughter, perhaps?—and he had to cough twice before he managed to ask, “will you really leave the villagers outside all night?”

“No,” Angelique said. “The spell will wear off around three in the morning. But I’m counting on them being too placid to realize it—which will further hit my point home when they finally *do* figure it out.”

Evariste rubbed his chin, then pushed back the fringe of his bangs (magicked for the day given that the previous night his hair had been shorn close to the scalp.) “You don’t sound as satisfied as you usually do after properly completing an assignment.”

“I’m a bit in shock, actually,” Angelique confessed.

“Over that young lady’s parting comment?” he asked.

She nodded.

“Why?”

“I don’t know entirely,” Angelique confessed. “Maybe it just seems...surprising that this Pate of hers is willing to wait.”

Evariste’s smile turned soft and gentle. “Any man worth his salt would be willing to wait until the end of time for the right woman.”

Angelique snorted. “If the wait is that long I question his intelligence because obviously there must be something wrong with the woman if she’s not ready after *that* amount of time.”

“Maybe she just needs to grow a little,” Evariste gently suggested.

“Grow? *Flowers* grow.” Angelique scoffed. “But what really gets me about this entire ordeal is that if people like Amice and Hudde were just more *honest* with each other and themselves, things might work out. Considering how easy communication can make life, it seems most people are morally opposed to it.”

“Perhaps it’s not as easy as you think,” Evariste said.

“In what way? You open your mouth and the truth comes out. That sounds a lot easier than facing the Council.”

Evariste smiled, though he shook his head. “That’s hardly romantic.”

“Bother romance. I’d much rather have a rare book of spells.” Angelique rolled her eyes. “The way folk carry on you would think romantic love is the only thing that makes life worth living.”

“One day I think—and hope—my dear apprentice, that you will discover the joys of love.”

Angelique wanted to snort again, but she held it in and instead eyed her master as he gazed warmly upon her.

She *wanted* to tell him that she’d willingly seal her magic first (what was *she* going to do with romantic love? Her greatest concern in life was retaining her powers and avoiding becoming the Veneno Conclave’s chained monster!) but there was something about the soft light in Evariste’s eyes that kept her lips glued shut.

Evariste’s smile grew as he stepped closer to her so his cloak brushed hers. “Now, shall we go home? Or do you wish to observe and watch your spell play out?”

“I’d like to go home, if that’s all right. I have some assignments I would like to practice.”

“I am yours to command, Angelique.”

“Evariste,” Angelique said in a slightly scolding tone. “I just spent the night impressing upon the folk of Upper Swell that it’s *not* good to try and control another!”

“Even if they willingly surrender?”

“*Especially* then!”

“Well then, you’ll just have to be extra diligent in what you want me to do!”

“*Evariste.*”

The End